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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

##### Armenian Editor-Activist Shot Dead in Istanbul

All papers: On 19 January, an unemployed teenager shot dead Hrant Dink, editor-in-chief of the Turkish-Armenian Agos weekly, in front of the paper's offices in downtown Istanbul. Dink, of Armenian heritage, was active in various democratic platforms and civil organizations, promoting free speech and rights issues pertaining to the Armenian community in Turkey. Ogun Samast, the suspect in the murder of Dink, was arrested after an image of him caught on security cameras was broadcast on television. On Saturday, police captured Samast, 17, at a bus station in the Black Sea coastal town of Samsun. He was carrying a gun at the time. He told investigators he shot Dink because Dink had "insulted Turks." Police also detained six other suspects. Samast and six other suspects are being questioned in Istanbul, police said. One suspect, Yasin Hayal, served 11 months in jail for the 2004 bombing of a McDonald's restaurant in the Black Sea coastal city of Trabzon.

The murderers of Dink and of a Roman Catholic priest in Trabzon a year ago are both from Trabzon, are both minors from poor families who frequented internet cafes and who were considered quiet types. Papers underline that after the killing of the priest, an armed attack on the Council of State (Danistay) was carried out and a judge was shot. The assassination of Dink appears to be a continuation of the earlier incidents. People who know Samast said he was a high-school dropout, had no job and was spending most of his time at internet cafes around his neighborhood.

Dink had written in his last column that he was worried about increasing death threats against him. "What's unbearable is the psychological torture that I'm living in, like a pigeon, turning my head up and down, left and right, my head quickly rotating." On January 10, he wrote, "My computer is loaded with e-mails full of anger and threats." He added that his pleas for official protection went unanswered. "We will silence you in a way that you

will never speak again," one of the letters said.

On Friday and over the weekend, thousands of Turks rallied to express their horror at the killing. Many well-wishers continue condolence visits to Agos daily lighting candles and leaving flowers. Groups protesting the murder chanted "We all are Armenians, we all are Kurds, long live the friendship of peoples." Various NGOs condemned the assassination during demonstrations staged in different cities, including Adana, Van, Izmir, Denizli, Diyarbakir, Tunceli, Hatay, and Mersin.

Dink will be laid to rest on Tuesday, January 23. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul will attend the funeral on behalf of the government. Prime Minister Erdogan will reportedly not participate because he will be attending the inauguration of the Bolu Mountain pass together with visiting Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi. Papers say Turkey invited the Yerevan Administration and Armenian diaspora and religious leaders to participate in the funeral.

Select Headlines and Quotes on the Murder of Hrant Dink  
'Hrant Dink is Turkey,' ran a front page headline in the mainstream Milliyet. Sabah said of the killing 'The greatest betrayal.' The Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak carried the headline on Saturday, "They have killed our Hrant." Conservative/opinion maker Zaman said 62 journalists have been assassinated in the nation's 84-year history. Many commentaries from over the weekend and today urge all the state staff including President Sezer, Prime Minister Erdogan, and General Buyukanit to attend Dink's funeral. Several columns call on Erdogan to change his mind and attend the funeral. "People would like to see President Sezer, who did not feel the need to congratulate Pamuk (for his Nobel award), at the funeral of Dink," a commentary in Milliyet said. Some articles

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blame Erdogan for not having done enough on the issue of Article 301 and freedom of expression. "One has the right to remind Prime Minister Erdogan, who did not utter a word when a national was almost going to be lynched because of Article 301 (referring to an incident in Trabzon last year) that he actually paved the way for this mad nationalism for the sake of the upcoming elections," said columnist Soli Ozel in Sabah over the weekend. Hurriyet's Ferai Tinc holds the state responsible, asking why Dink was left unprotected even though he was the target of threats.

Several other columnists worry about the consequences of this murder in terms of Turkey's image in the world, emphasizing that this incident has strengthened the Armenian diaspora which seeks to convict Turkey, and which turned European and US public opinion against Turkey. They say the Dink murder has actually extended support to the Armenian genocide draft bill to be debated in the US Congress. Derya Sazak of Milliyet said of Article 301, "This legal system brings forward the culture of hatred and lynching, in which Dink became an open target. The murderers always chase moderate voices, which Turkey needs the most." Another Turkish-Armenian journalist, Zaman's Etyen Mahcupyan, wrote over the weekend, "Perhaps, this is an opportunity for this nation to free itself of an identity shaped by bragging and heroic talk, and to create a new one. If the majority is inclined toward violence in a country, if the keeper of the land does not want even the doves to live in its backyard, then that country is sick. Turkey is sick. I have always tried to see attempts at healing. Today, however, I cannot help but see only disease".

Turkey's Nobel winning novelist Orhan Pamuk held "Those who defended Article 301 and those who still want to keep it" responsible for Dink's death. "Those who carried out a campaign against him, those who declared him an enemy of the Turks and pinpointed him as a target are responsible for his death," said Pamuk.

The main opposition CHP deputy chairman Onur Oymen accused the government of failing to take security measures to protect Dink, although he had informed authorities that he was receiving death threats. Nationalist Action Party (MHP) deputy leader Mehmet Sandir said Dink was an Armenian writer who had disagreements with the Armenian diaspora. "A new ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia) campaign may be launched. The government

must take measures to protect our diplomats," said Sandir.

Prime Minister Erdogan said on Friday the fatal shooting of Dink was an attack on Turkey's peace and stability. Deputy Prime Minister Premier Abdullatif Sener questioned the timing of the assassination of Dink and said the murder might be part of "a well-calculated plan." "The murder should not be seen as an individual case," Sener said. President Sezer said the murder was "ugly and shameful." Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief General Yasar Buyukanit strongly condemned the heinous attack against Dink. "The shots fired on Hrant Dink were actually fired on Turkey, we expect the perpetrator to be caught as soon as possible so that the ugly ploy can be revealed," Buyukanit said in a statement.

#### Editorial Commentary on the Death of Hrant Dink

Ergun Babahan commented in the mass appeal Sabah (1/22): "The triggerman has been arrested. The government and the security officials in Istanbul are rather proud of themselves for fulfilling their duties. However, they don't deserve any praise because if it wasn't for the security camera of a shop at the scene, the murderer would have continued to live his life in Trabzon freely. Hrant Dink is not with us today because you failed to do your job properly and did not protect him. One other aspect of the assassination is that the people responsible for Hrant Dink's murder are the ones leading Turkey into a chauvinistic atmosphere. Those people who targeted Orhan Pamuk each time he opened his mouth, columnists who felt free to declare certain people either patriots or traitors, Justice Minister Cemil Cicek who defended the Turkish Penal Code's Article

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301 heatedly; these are the reasons that such an atmosphere has been established in Turkey. Was the triggerman acting alone or was he the last link in a chain that includes the media, the politicians and the military? It is time to turn and look into the mirror in order to come to terms with ourselves and our past."

Mehmet Yilmaz observed in the mass appeal Hurriyet (1/22): "Hrant Dink was a journalist who tried to explain something, but could never successfully get his voice heard. Agos newspaper announced that it was Dink's last will that slogans not be chanted at his funeral. Who knows, maybe he wanted us to think quietly while we were walking at his funeral. To think about why he and his brothers had Turkish names as well their Armenian names, why he had to have his Turkish name on his passport, why an Armenian photographer said that his mother always called him by his Turkish name while he was playing in the park in Istanbul as a child, why Dink never made sergeant during his military service even though he had the necessary scores on his tests. I read his sad life story from the papers that he was brought up in an Armenian orphanage in Istanbul and it was there that he met his wife. But even though most of us listened to or read his life story with tears in our eyes, I am sure that none of us remembered that the Republic of Turkey forced these orphanages to shut down by confiscating these foundations' assets. Let us all remember that the court cases to correct this situation are still with the European Court of Human Rights and there is also still legislation in Parliament to address this. There are so many issues we all have to think about while we are crying!"

Can Dunder wrote in the mainstream Milliyet (1/22): "President Sezer should walk right at the front of the funeral tomorrow as a symbol of this country's integrity. The representation of the government and the military at the top level will give a message to the world that Turkey condemns the assassination. Turkey now should demonstrate bold gestures such as opening the border and starting diplomatic relations with Armenia, naming the street on which he was assassinated after Dink; having all newspapers distribute copies of Agos' as their supplement. If Turkey could learn lessons from Dink's death and use Dink's ideology as a turning point, then it will be able to lift its head up and face the world."

#### Burns Visits Turkey

Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Radikal and Zaman reported over the weekend State Department Under Secretary Nicholas Burns issued important messages during his meetings with Turkish leaders in Ankara; that the PKK problem must definitely be solved, the Kirkuk referendum should be held this year, Washington will do its best to block a

possible Armenian genocide bill at the US Congress, and Turkey and the US will continue working together in the region as strategic partners. Papers note that Burns has asked Turkey to combat terrorism without resorting to cross-border military incursions into northern Iraq.

#### AKP MPs Camp near Ankara

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan told a meeting of his ruling AKP lawmakers over the weekend in Kizilcahamam near Ankara that 2007 will be "a year of competition and a new beginning," in remarks perceived by AKP officials and press as a signal indicating Erdogan's plans to run for president. Touching on several issues, Erdogan predicted that a USD 10.9 billion debt Turkey owes to the IMF will drop to USD 6 billion by the end of 2007. The PM reiterated his government's determination for EU membership, stressing that Turkey has done everything in fulfilling its responsibilities to that end. Erdogan also rejected accusations that the AKP government has made concessions with regard to the Cyprus question.

#### Baghdad Plane Crash Survivor Sent to Turkey

Radikal, Cumhuriyet and Zaman reported over the weekend that Abdullah Akyuz, the sole survivor of a Moldovan plane carrying mostly Turkish workers crash near Baghdad was sent to Turkey on

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Saturday, and is now being treated in a hospital in Ankara. Akyuz is in serious condition, with several fractures and burns over his body, yet he appears to be suffering no memory loss, his doctors said.

#### TUSIAD Calls for New Constitution

All papers reported over the weekend that Turkey's influential business group TUSIAD said because Turkey's 1982 Constitution was drafted by the military, they were calling for a new constitution with the broad participation of the nation. TUSIAD based its call on its 1997 report, "Perspectives for Democratization in Turkey," that examined Turkey's democracy in the last decade with several recommendations for elections, political parties, and the judiciary. The report says the existing 10-percent national threshold should be lowered to 5 percent, the Turkish General Staff affiliated to the Defense Ministry, the National Security Council (MGK) be abolished, the powers of the president be reduced, and that military courts be abolished.

#### TV News:

(NTV, 7.00 A.M.)

#### Domestic News

- The Turkish Parliament will hold a closed session Tuesday to debate developments in Iraq.
- EU foreign ministers will meet in Brussels to discuss direct trade with Turkish Cyprus.
- The Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I will deliver a speech Monday on inter-religious dialogue at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg.
- A 5.0-magnitude earthquake was reported Sunday morning in the eastern province of Agri. There are reportedly no casualties.
- Financial Times report the emerging markets bank Standard Chartered is the frontrunner to buy medium-size Turkish lender Oyakbank in a deal that could be worth USD 2 billion.

#### International News

- President Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan website claimed the US was preparing for the establishment of a military base in northern Iraq on the border with Iran.
- President Papadopoulos said he will not accept procedures designed to create two separate legal entities in Cyprus.

- Palestinian President Abbas and exiled Hamas leader Meshaal kick off talks to establish a national unity government.
- Hillary Clinton holds an early lead over other top candidates in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON